United Nations A/68/PV.77

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

77th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 March 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 120 and adopted resolution 68/7, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", at its 35th plenary meeting, on 21 October 2013. Permit me to make a statement.

Today, we commemorate the spirit, courage and legacy of the millions of men, women and children who were victims of one of the darkest and most abhorrent chapters in history — the transatlantic slave trade. As we gather for this year's International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we call to mind the memory of all those who suffered the cruelty and injustice of the largest forced migration in history. A number of commemorative activities will be held in observance of this Day, and I encourage the support and participation of all Member States.

The theme of this year's celebration is "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond". This year, we acknowledge the role of a country synonymous with the quest for freedom against the institution of slavery. The Haitian revolution of 1791 to 1804 is considered by historians to be the most successful and sustained slave revolt to have ever occurred. Led by Toussaint Louverture, as well as others such as Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, the Haitian revolution was a defining moment in the histories of Europe and the Americas. It culminated in the birth of a new nation, the Republic of Haiti, which celebrated its two hundred and tenth anniversary in January.

This past September, we acknowledged the Republic of Haiti's struggle against slavery with the commission for the permanent memorial project, which was awarded to Mr. Rodney Leon, an American architect of Haitian descent. It was my pleasure to participate in that ceremony, which recognized the winning design, namely, Mr. Leon's "The Ark of Return", and to pay tribute to the skilled artists from 83 different countries who participated in the contest with the submission of 310 designs. The permanent memorial is not only a symbol of remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade but also a powerful tribute to the human fortitude and courage that led to the breaking of the shackles of slavery and the burdens of bigotry.

The Permanent Memorial Committee has reported that the design and construction phases of the project have commenced with a view to the unveiling of the memorial at the start of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I recognize the generous contributions made so far by some Member States to the Permanent Memorial Fund. Regrettably, however, the

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Fund still lacks the amount required for the completion of that worthy project. Since it was the Assembly that decided that the memorial should be erected, I urge all Member States to do their utmost and to make additional contributions to that eminently worthy project so that it can be completed by the date decided upon.

Today, we once again gather to honour the universal and powerful human truths that, wherever peoples are oppressed and crippled by discrimination, there are and should be peoples who stand up to oppression and speak up against discrimination.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, launched in Ouidah, Benin, in 1994. In many ways, that Project broke the silence on slavery and the slave trade by raising our collective awareness. Through the Project's intercultural dialogue and activities, research and publications, we know and understand more about the slave trade and its devastating consequences.

More significantly, the Project has contributed to the international community's acknowledgement that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity, as determined at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa. That important acknowledgement can be found in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

In that regard, I am delighted to have with us here today The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, who is a former Governor General of Canada, the current UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti and a member of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project (2014-2015). She will share her insights with us as the key presenter on this International Day of Remembrance. We will also be treated to a cultural performance by the renowned Haitian singer Ms. Emeline Michel.

UNESCO's work in this field is another reminder that we must continue to study the history and legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The resources and materials available at educational institutions worldwide provide us with an opportunity to explore the causes and consequences of slavery and to reflect upon the lessons learned. We can also use the outreach opportunities of this Day to draw attention to the many contributions that enslaved Africans made to nation-building through the application of their knowledge and skills.

While we reflect on the past, we must also acknowledge the cruelties that continue to exist today. Foremost among them, slavery still stalks our planet in many forms and manifestations. Too many innocent women and young girls are held in bondage and denied their freedom and right to live in dignity due to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Too many children are held in servitude and are victims of child labour. Combating such abuses is a daunting challenge. We must turn our commitments into concrete action so that women and young people can live without fear and want.

Four days ago, we commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which speaks to another relevant and pervasive problem in our societies. The legacy of the transatlantic slave trade reminds us of the continued dangers of racism, injustice and prejudice and speaks to the work that we must still do in that regard.

Later this year, during the sixty-ninth session, we will launch the International Decade for People of African Descent, from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2024, under the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development". Historical injustices have undeniably contributed to the inequality, economic disparities, marginalization and social exclusion faced by people of African descent in different parts of the world.

During last week's commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (see A/68/PV.76), we heard from many Member States who had undertaken initiatives at the national level to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent in all spheres. Let us use the opportunity afforded by the Decade to continue our fight for a world free of racism and discrimination.

As a community of nations, it is our responsibility to address the root causes of modern-day slavery, to provide protection and assistance to the victims and to ensure that there is no impunity for the perpetrators of such practices. By our continued and sustained efforts to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery, as well as racism and racial discrimination, we move forward down the path of dignity, decency and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

I now give the floor to the Chef de Cabinet, Under-Secretary-General Susana Malcorra, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Malcorra: It is honour to represent the Secretary-General at this important event. The Secretary-General regrets that he is not able to attend and has asked me to deliver this message on his behalf.

> "Each year on this day we honour the memory of the millions of men, women and children who endured the curse of slavery. By recalling the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade, we recommit to educating current and future generations on the dangers of racism and prejudice.
>
> "The theme of this year's observance is "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond". It pays tribute to the fight against slavery in nations around the world and marks 210 years since the Republic of Haiti became the first nation to win independence as a result of the struggle of enslaved men and women. As the President of the General Assembly just indicated, we are also marking the twentieth anniversary of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, launched to break the silence surrounding the slave trade and its consequences.
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> "At United Nations Headquarters, work is under way on a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It will stand as a constant reminder of the courage of the slaves, abolitionists and unsung heroes who helped end the oppression of slavery. It will also promote greater recognition of the contributions that slaves and their descendants have made in their societies.
>
> "I hope the memorial will also be a source of inspiration in the continuing fight against the many forms of slavery that still exist today. Around the world, millions of people are subject to human trafficking, debt bondage, sexual slavery and domestic servitude while the perpetrators of those violations of human rights operate with total impunity.
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> "On this day, let us remember the abuses of the past and intensify our efforts to end those of the present."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Da Gama (Guinea-Bissau): On behalf of the African Group, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this annual commemorative event on a matter close to the heart of Africa, the continent most affected by this scourge. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade mark one of the darkest chapters in human history, spanning over 400 years, claiming a toll of more than 15 million men, women and children — victims of atrocities of such brutality it is indeed an inhumane tragedy.

In commemoration of the memory of the victims, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/122, of 17 December 2007, declared 25 March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, to be observed annually. The International Day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

This year's theme, "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond", is an opportunity for us to look back at history, to pay tribute to the unsung heroes and to recognize that the slave trade left an indelible mark on the human conscience, as well as the unacceptable complicity of nations that were involved in that tragedy under the pretext of trade for over 400 years.

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history, and undeniably one of the most inhumane. The extensive exodus of Africans spread to many areas of the world over a 400-year period and was unprecedented in the annals of recorded human history.

The General Assembly adopted resolution 63/5, on 20 October, 2008, and welcomed the proposal of erecting

> "at a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters that is easily accessible to delegates, United Nations staff and visitors, a permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade" (*resolution 63/5, para. 1*).

The Permanent Memorial initiative was established to oversee the permanent memorial project, with membership drawn from all geographical regions and with Member States from the Caribbean Community and the African Union playing a leading role. Coincidentally, Mr. Rodney Leon, a son of Haiti, was selected as the winner of the international competition to design the memorial. The memorial will stand tall as

a constant reminder of, and in honour of, the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The "Ark of Return" is the name that the permanent memorial will bear. As a work of art, it will illustrate, in the words of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, "a voice of change and hope" that indeed "deepens our faith in human goodness and decency, and for this, we are all grateful".

The Ark of Return is ready to be built right here at the United Nations. Several contributions from Member States have made that possible, and we express our collective thanks. I wish to urge all Member States to make just one more effort to reach the finish line — that of joining hands to make the final financial contribution needed for the completion of the memorial, which is a symbol of all our aspirations and dreams and of the memory of those lives lost — acknowledging the tragedy and remembering the legacy, lest we forget.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga, who will speak on behalf of the States of the Asia-Pacific Group.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): As Chair of the Asia Pacific Group for the month of March, I have the honour to speak on behalf of its 55 Member States.

At the outset, we express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having convened this special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly, on the seventh annual International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We would also like to thank all representatives present today in the General Assembly.

This year's theme, "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond", pays tribute to the fight against slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which were a tragically and grossly inhumane global crime against humanity that should never be forgotten. We also gather here today to honour the lives of the more than 15 million men, women and children from the African continent who suffered as victims of that brutal system over the span of more than 400 years, from the 1500s to the 1900s. Indeed, this is a very dark chapter in our history, clear evidence of man's inhumanity to our fellow men and our capacity for evil in our treatment of others.

However, it is worthy to note unsung heroes such as former British Member of Parliament William Wilberforce and President Lincoln of the United States, who fought for the freedom of slaves. However, notwithstanding the abolishment of legalized slavery, we still face modern forms of slavery, such as debt bondage, forced labour, forced and underage marriages, the recruitment of child soldiers and trafficking in children. The majority of those victims are people who suffer continued poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization and socioeconomic exclusion. We must therefore continue to fight this contemporary scourge and actively pursue freedom from slavery and human dignity for all.

Today, I think we are reminded by the theme that the success of our continued fight will lie first in freeing ourselves from the system that exists today that allows contemporary forms of slavery to persist. As such, beyond remembering the past and moving beyond Haiti, there is a need not only to remember and honour, but to take action as well. In taking action against those modern forms of slavery to eliminate them from existence, we indeed honour and remember those who paid the price through death and experience. The inhumane practice of people exploiting other people is not unlike the master and the slave of the past, and such practices persist to this day through modern forms of slavery.

The system I speak of today that allows for the continued enslavement of victims in modern times is poverty. Poverty creates the circumstances, ripe for exploitation by the modern slave-master, to take advantage of the poor and the desperate, allowing for the contemporary forms of slavery. Addressing the roots and tackling the causes of poverty would eradicate the system created by the modern slave master to perpetuate this blight on our common humanity. I believe this is what the great emancipator and Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture meant when he declared that he was born a slave but nature gave him the soul of a free man.

Louverture was born into a system that enslaved him and his people, but his will, reflected in his actions to be free and to free his people, resulted in the liberation of his country. We too, therefore, are reminded here today that we must follow suit, and move beyond Haiti by using that example and our will to be free — our will to be free from the poverty that enslaves our fellow man and to finally emancipate ourselves from the bondage of this modern-day form of slavery. We must do so for the sake of the victims of the past and the present and, indeed, for ourselves.

We commend the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Group for their continuing dedication to this annual Commemorative Day. This day of worldwide activities to remember the victims is an opportune moment to raise awareness and discuss the causes, consequences and lessons learned so that no person or country is ever again subjected to the mass deportation, slavery, racism and prejudice that will be remembered forever as among the worst violations of human rights in history.

We therefore recall the support for the efforts made by CARICOM, the African Group, and the Permanent Memorial Committee, led by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, to implement resolution 63/5 and erect the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery. In noting that the project is targeted for completion at the opening of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, with the inclusion of the winning design "Ark of Return", we call on Member States and other interested parties to support this initiative, including additional voluntary contributions to the fund.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Every year on this day, the United Nations honours and remembers the millions of people who suffered and died in slavery. But on this day, we also need to make a pledge to intensify our efforts to eliminate the remnants of slavery and to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice that persist to this very day.

The transatlantic slave trade was one of the darkest chapters in human history and, unfortunately, many people around the world still suffer the consequences of that tragedy, which took the lives of millions of people. Today it is our responsibility to make sure that the world never forgets this brutality and that the facts of slavery are examined, understood and addressed adequately.

On this day we must also remember the brave men and women who struggled out from under slavery and risked their lives for freedom. Their courage and determination should lead us in our own struggle against contemporary forms of slavery.

This year we celebrate the victory over slavery and the establishment, 210 years ago, of the Republic of Haiti, which was the first nation to become independent as a result of a slave revolt.

(*spoke in French*)

I therefore take this opportunity to express my heartfelt congratulations to my Haitain friends.

(*spoke in English*)

The year 2014 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, launched in Benin, with the aim of breaking the silence on the slave trade and slavery and raising awareness with regard to its consequences. We welcome the progress achieved so far and the contribution of the project to the recognition of the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity.

The Eastern European States supported the decision to establish a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which would help us keep alive the memory of the millions of people who suffered in that tragedy.

There is no place in our world for slavery in any form, and we must all step up our efforts to work towards its eradication. The prohibition of slavery is a cornerstone of international human rights law. Yet contemporary forms of slavery and slavery-like practices still exist in all regions of the world. It is alarming that the estimated number of persons, including children, subjected to forced labour continues to increase worldwide while, at the same time, very few perpetrators are brought to justice. Robust protections against human rights abuses should be established at national and international levels to combat contemporary forms of slavery.

The Eastern European States share the conviction that in their strategies aimed at the eradication of slavery countries need to focus more on measures for prevention, protection and victim support, as well as the prosecution of the perpetrators. Contemporary forms of slavery warrant serious and heightened attention from the international community.

We should all join efforts to eradicate trafficking in human beings. It is a matter of deep concern that women, men, boys and girls in vulnerable positions are traded for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation, the removal of organs, begging, domestic servitude, forced marriage, illegal adoption, et cetera.

Enhanced measures against trafficking in human beings need to be implemented both at national and

international levels, including special mechanisms to better identify, refer, protect and assist trafficked victims, as well as to prosecute cross-border trafficking cases. We also recognize the important role in that regard played by civil society organizations and service providers working on victim protection and assistance.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that, unfortunately, slavery is not yet a thing of the past. It is appalling that even today human beings are being sold and trafficked into forced labour or prostitution. The international community still has a long way to go to eradicate trafficking in human beings and to put an end to contemporary forms of slavery.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Gálvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States on the 2014 International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade under the theme "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond".

On 25 March every year, the General Assembly pays honour the victims of the inhumane system of the transatlantic slave trade, which uprooted countless millions of men, women and children from their homes and shipped them and sold them as cargo to various regions, including the Americas, where they received inhumane, unfair and despicable treatment and were subjected to torture, abuse and forced labour.

While slavery and the transatlantic slave trade were among the gravest crimes against humanity, we must recognize that they have not been acknowledged adequately and that too little is known about this inhumane system, the lasting consequences of which continue to be felt in many parts of our societies to this very day.

From that situation surged the liberation of the many African men, women and children who had endured the torment, torture and attempted dehumanization, and who fought against immense odds to gain their freedom. In that regard, as the theme chosen for this session appropriately underscores — "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond" — the independence proclaimed by Haiti in 1804 was a milestone in our history as the first slave revolt that managed to lead to the foundation of a State. That set in motion the movement for freedom from bondage in other parts of the Caribbean and the broader Latin American region, as well as in North America, Europe and beyond. Undeniably, that revolt set a precedent and triggered other examples where the resistance of the human spirit to unacceptable domination strengthened the global cause of freedom and dignity, as well as the resole of humankind to fight tirelessly against the scourge of slavery, racism and racial discrimination.

Nonetheless, the struggle for full and absolute emancipation is a fight that continues, awaiting the necessary reparation to fully heal humankind from the brutality of the period when slavery was forced and perpetuated upon a particular segment of humankind. In that regard, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States strongly supported the proclamation by the General Assembly, on 13 December 2013, of the International Decade for People of African Descent, beginning on 1 January 2015, under the apt theme of "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development". In the same spirit, the Foreign Ministers of our region proclaimed the International Decade for Latin American and Caribbean People of African Descent, which began on 1 January 2014.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States takes note of the August 2013 report of the Secretary-General outlining the implementation of the outreach programme and steps to enhance global awareness on the activities associated with the commemoration (A/68/291).

We wish to express our recognition and admiration for the important work of UNESCO through its successful Slave Route Project on the theme "Resistance, freedom, heritage" and, more recently, with the production of the educational film entitled *A Story Not To Be Forgotten*.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States firmly stresses the importance of culture at the heart of the identity of each of our countries and as a catalyst of cultural integration in our region, which is characterized by the diversity of cultural expressions of our Latin American and Caribbean identities. In that regard, our region attaches great importance to educating and informing current and future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade so as to ensure that this dark period of human history is never repeated.

We are especially appreciative of the events organized around this commemoration. At the national

level, a number of initiatives have been undertaken by States of our Group with a view to disseminating information on the slave trade and its gruesome historical legacy.

The Group commends the leading role played by Jamaica and other Member States of the region and of the Caribbean Community, in close collaboration with the Member States of the African Group, regarding the development of the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We encourage States that have not yet done so to make a contribution to the fund established for the permanent memorial. In that connection, the Members States of Latin America and the Caribbean reiterate their firm support for the permanent memorial and hope that it will be completed and erected at a place of prominence at the United Nations Headquarters in time for the opening of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, the Member States of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States join with the entire international community in commemorating this important day that celebrates the struggle and subsequent achievements of the people who were emancipated from the scourge of physical slavery. It is indeed a day of celebration, but it is also a day for us to take stock and to deepen our resolve to tackle the contemporary challenges of inequality, poverty, colonialism and more — all of which have their antecedents in the mindset that believed that one race was superior and another was inferior. That concept must be thoroughly discredited and abandoned even in its most contemporary forms. Freedom won must be constantly protected. Please count on States Members of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries in that noble pursuit.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and other States Group.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I would first of all like to note how appropriate it is the General Assembly is being presided over today by a representative of a region that was so horribly affected by the trade we are debating.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States in commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It is now more than 200 years since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, which represented one of the longest, most brutal and most sustained assaults on human rights and human dignity in recorded history. The full toll of that cruel trade may never be known, but between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries it is likely that it claimed more than 12 million victims. As many as 18 per cent of those who were forced to embark on the now-infamous Middle Passage are believed to have perished before reaching their destination, while the suffering and indignity experienced by those who did survive remains one of the darkest stains on humankind's collective conscience.

Today we gather to pay our solemn respect to the countless victims of that barbaric and inhumane trade, to remember its aftermath in the form of generations of enforced labour with all its attendant cruelties and to acknowledge the suffering and injustice they endured, as well as the suffering, injustice and anguish of those in their homelands from whom they had been so arbitrarily and cruelly taken.

Unfortunately, slavery is not just a scourge of the past, nor simply an injustice of the past only to be acknowledged as such. Even today, millions of our fellow human beings are subjected to practices that are very clearly modern forms of slavery, including human trafficking, forced prostitution, debt bondage, the forcible involvement of children in armed conflict and forced marriages. All those are examples of contemporary practices that hark back to the grave injustices of past times, practices made all the more stark by today's transportation and communication technologies. Often the victims are the most vulnerable, taken from what are often our most vulnerable communities.

One of the best ways that we can pay tribute to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade is for us to redouble our efforts to end all contemporary forms of slavery. Today's commemorations also serve as a powerful reminder that much remains to be done to combat other affronts to human rights and human dignity, including racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

As we honour today the victims of one of history's greatest crimes — one of its most heart-wrenching tragedies — let us also summon the will to stand determined and united in championing the fundamental rights and the basic dignities they were so cruelly

denied and which today are still denied to many, and let us do so in the name and on behalf of all members of our global family.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Cousens (United States of America): Today we pay tribute to the men, women and children robbed of their freedom and their lives by slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We honour the memory of the millions who died, who were stolen from their families, who suffered from disease and deprivation and who experienced other untold horrors because of slavery and its barbaric toll. The transatlantic slave trade is a stain on our collective conscience that indelibly marked our own history and left wounds we must still strive to heal.

Today we also commemorate those who fought in countries around the world against that outrageous practice. We particularly honour those who defied the chains of captivity, intimidation, violence and fear to rise up against injustice and reclaim their humanity and their rightful freedom. It was enslaved men and women who rose up 210 years ago to claim their independence in what became the Republic of Haiti who showed the world that slavery, oppression and indignity could be overcome.

We look forward to the completion of the permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade designed by a Haitian-American, Rodney Leon, as a powerful reminder of their strength and common purpose. We must always remember their courage and the possibility for justice to triumph over even the darkest crimes. As we combat modern day forms of slavery today, we must be inspired by their example and be unrelenting in our resolve to see all individuals free to live in peace and dignity, free from captivity, free from exploitation and abuse, and free from racism, discrimination and prejudice.

The transatlantic slave trade is one of the darkest chapters in human history. It marks us in ways that we must always strive to overcome and that we must never allow ourselves to forget. Today we recommit to combating slavery's enduring consequences. We renew our collective determination to end slavery in all its forms and we rededicate ourselves to advancing rights, freedom and dignity for all.

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Special Envoy for Haiti and member of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project (2014-2015), Ms. Michaëlle Jean, to make a statement on this occasion.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Ms. Jean, to make a statement at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Jean.

Ms. Jean (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President, the Chef de Cabinet and the Chairs of the regional groups for their statements, which have deeply touched me.

It is, of course, with great feeling that I address the Assembly on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and of 400 years of vile treatment, which ruined millions of lives. We are living in a world where shadows and light live together, where lives are continuously threatened, where liberties are constantly scorned. And this Hall in which we have gathered is the bright demonstration of a determination to bring the best part of ourselves together against all the dark forces of destruction.

We, the peoples of the United Nations, are determined to save future generations from the scourges that have been inflicted upon humankind and have caused unimaginable suffering to people, determined to express our faith in basic rights, our faith in the dignity and value of the human being, our faith in the equality between the rights of men and women, and also the equality between nations large and small. We are determined to also establish the necessary conditions for maintaining justice, determined to ensure social progress and establish better living conditions in greater freedom. We, the peoples of the United Nations, have decided to come together to create a better world and to be ever mindful in the face of that which would undermine and jeopardize it.

In meeting here today, we seek to remember together one of the darkest experiences in the history

of humankind. We are in this Hall because we believe in the duty to remember. We know how important it is to draw lessons from the past in order to strengthen the present and build the future. Knowing where we come from, assessing the path that has been covered and recognizing the crimes that have been committed and hardships overcome by those who came before us makes us stronger and more enlightened. A people without memory has no future, said the poet and politician Aimé Césaire. And we know that the duty to remember is a difficult but necessary task.

The experience that I will talk about in this Hall is my own, but it concerns humankind as a whole. I was born as part of the dark past that we are commemorating today. I was born of the men, women and children who, by the thousands, were cruelly split apart and robbed of everything — their names, their languages, their cultures, their homes, their relationships, their dignity and their humanity. I am the daughter of those 15 to 25 or 30 million human beings who were captured and then deported to be sold like beasts of burden. I come from those totally destroyed lives, reduced to nothing by various scurrilous trade routes, which were perfectly developed and accepted over centuries — the transatlantic slave trade established between Europe, Africa and America.

The figures are awful, but they hide even more alarming casualties, because for every survivor it is estimated that five others died — victims of invasions and attacks carried out to capture slaves; victims who died in multitudes during forced deportations or cruelty suffered before deportation. Thousands died of disease and abuse in the crossing of the Atlantic. The Atlantic Ocean is a shrine, an immense grave. The crimes were unspeakable and the victims innumerable. I was born of one of the plantations, which through total enslavement, the forced labour of thousands of my ancestors, ensured the prosperity of the European colonial Powers that seized the American continents, where the indigenous populations were exterminated.

I was born of Saint-Domingue — the old jewel of the French colony — whence came a strong call from such brave black fighters as Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Alexandre Pétion, who were boldly followed by tens of thousands of armed slaves who rebelled and demonstrated great courage. I am born of that struggle which we must now celebrate. It was a struggle of men and women who were determined to put an end to that immoral trade, to that shameful exploitation, which condemned them to non-existence, and who found in the sublime words and values of freedom, equality and fraternity the great possibility to be reborn.

Those words and values, which came from the Enlightenment movement, were able to enlighten humankind and brought a new dawn to the darkest corners of the plantations from which I came. I am born of those women and men who found in the brilliance of those ideas the meaning of their own dreams for freedom, their deep aspiration to equality and their immense need for fraternity. We would not be together today, and the woman that I am would not be standing free before the Assembly were it not for the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers, which were, in essence, as the philosopher Tzvetan Todorov said, taken with history and eternity, freedom and equality.

The Enlightenment gave rise to three fundamental, unvarnished ideas with innumerable consequences. First was the idea of autonomy, and consequently emancipation, which required the freedom to examine, question, criticize, doubt, choose and decide for oneself. Then there was the idea of the purpose of humankind, which gave rise to the assertion that all human beings, through their very nature as humans, possess inalienable rights. And finally there was the idea of universality, from which comes the demand for equality and which makes it possible for more struggles to be undertaken today — those of women, of course, and efforts to combat all forms of alienation from freedom. From the Enlightenment came the following three words: liberty, equality, fraternity, with all the promises they entail and which were spread to light the flame of all the dreams of a newfound humanity. Those three words not only inspired the French Revolution, but changed an entire world.

And I know what the dream of emancipation inspired among my ancestors — liberty, equality and fraternity — and for us, the blacks, who were not invited to the revolutionary banquet and could not partake of that bread. But it is not important that those words were pronounced in the oppressor's language. My ancestors recognized them in their own flesh and took ownership of them as one takes ownership of the spoils — something that is owed, a treasure that should be shared, a beautiful treasure that is there for the taking. Nothing is more beautiful. Liberty, equality, fraternity — three words that are the motto for a struggle that, while it may try us to the marrow, is

yet nothing like the bite of the whip, of humiliation, of rape, of dispossession, of racism. It was on those ideas that my ancestors would push back the immovable and overcome the impossible. Thus in 1804 was born the first republic of black men and women liberated by themselves and able to return to the land soiled by their degradation and sorrowing captivity its original name, Haiti — Haiti, which means a mountainous land in the language of the first Caribbean people — Arawak, Taino, Caribe, all decimated. And the dream realized in Haiti very quickly encouraged others. From Haiti came the spark that lit the great cauldron of the fight to abolish slavery, particularly in the Americas.

Liberty, equality, fraternity — not just for us, Haitian men and women, but for all those in chains, said the President of the young Haitian Republic, Alexandre Pétion, to Simón Bolívar, known as El Libertador, driven from Venezuela and Jamaica in 1815 and given asylum by Pétion. He also gave him wings, because Pétion agreed to supply Bolívar with the financial and logistical means to take up his campaign for liberation once more, but only on condition, he insisted, that his fight would guarantee the emancipation of the slaves in all the liberated lands — a challenge to Bolívar, who was himself descended from great slaveowning families.

And thus were born the new republics of Latin America, as a whole and individually, of the victorious vision and resources of the little republic, which paid dearly for it. The great Powers of Europe, with the complicity of the enslaving and segregationist United States of that era, were not slow to respond. Isolated by an embargo, its economy reduced to nothing, deprived of access to every market, the young nation of Haiti was branded and trapped. But standing tall in the face of history, Haitians opened and forced the way forward. Four years later, in 1807, the British Parliament enacted a bill outlawing the slave trade. The liberation of the Latino countries emerged from the abolition of slavery, achieved 30 years later. Fifty-six years later, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the abolition of slavery in the slaveowning secessionist states of the South.

Down the decades, women also took up the cause proclaiming and winning their right to vote. Then came the great twentieth-century decolonization movement in Africa, followed by the civil rights movement of black Americans in the United States. On 25 March 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr., with thousands of demonstrators, entered Montgomery after days on the march and greeted the Governor of Alabama, saying that they had not arrived merely after five days and 80 kilometres marching but after three centuries of suffering and poverty; they had arrived before the Governor of Alabama to declare to him that they now demanded their freedom, the right to vote, equal protection under the law and an end to police violence. Then, more recently, came the end of apartheid in South Africa and the election of Nelson Mandela, Madiba.

(*spoke in English*)

So this year marks the 210th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Haiti. And it is still standing, teetering from one ordeal to the next, sometimes betrayed by its own people, from human disaster to natural disaster, including the earthquake of 2010, which left the country deeply wounded and in ruins, mourning the death of 300,000 of its dearest sons and daughters. Haiti bends but does not break. The country seeks to be reborn, to exit poverty, to break free from the aid dependency that undermines its sovereignty, for which it paid such a high price. Haitian women and men want all of humankind to remember.

When Barack Obama was elected President of the United States in November 2008 his first visit to a foreign country, as is customary, was to Canada, in February 2009. History intended for the first black President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States to be greeted by me, the first black Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada. The power of that symbol was not lost on anyone. It was the first thing we shared when we met, enjoying the moment. The Assembly should also know that after we discussed issues of interest to both our countries, Canada and the United States, President Obama asked me about Haiti.

I had just come home from an official visit there to assess the damage from a violent hurricane in the northern parts of the country. While I was in Haiti, as I addressed a crowd of mostly young people gathered at the foot of a statue of Toussaint Louverture, the great hero of Haiti's independence, all of a sudden a young woman stepped forward and shouted. Remember, she said, you owe it to them. You owe it to our heroes. If it were not for what they did, today you would not be the Governor General of Canada. If it were not for their courage, their struggles, their victory, Barack Obama would not be President of the United States, either. Tell him that everything got started here, in Haiti. We are poor, but we are proud, and we are strong, she said.

That girl, was she not right, I asked President Obama. It is true, she is so right, he kept repeating. It is true. She is so right. He was obviously quite moved, nodding his head in approval. Haitian women and men want all of humankind to remember. And that is what we have chosen to do, as we gather here on this day, we the people of the United Nations, who have chosen to sit at the same table, under the same roof, under a covenant of solidarity, with an ethic of sharing that we must always strengthen and tirelessly cultivate so that it may bring its rich and vital fruits to humankind — progress, peace and stability, knowledge and education for all, sustainable development, human rights, responsibility, liberty and prosperity — the only true and lasting stalwarts against turmoil and the forces of destruction, the forces of darkness that still lurk, seeking to retake their ground.

(*spoke in French*)

We have come a long way, and the road is still long, very long, studded with pitfalls that we create ourselves, that we seek to undo and that make us test ourselves. It is up to us, the peoples of the United Nations, to ensure that this world, which we wish to be rich through the melding of our cultures, experience, civilizations and interlinking destinies, is shaped on enduring brotherhood on the basis of dignity. As everyone has said today, we must move from words to action in the greatest confidence and with all the necessary perseverance.

The slave boats of yesterday remind us of today's boat people and the tragedy of millions of people trying to escape poverty crammed into makeshift boats in the hope of a better life, with the news constantly reporting the sinking of those boats and the tragic toll of bodies washed ashore. The number of people throughout the world who are subjected to forced labour or who suffer the inhumane human trafficking that escapes the international community's attention is also of great concern. This International Day reminds the entire world that today, like yesterday, the struggle for freedom, equality and brotherhood and for the respect of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains crucial and is more urgent than ever.

I, too, would in passing like to pay tribute to the upcoming inauguration, at United Nations Headquarters, of the work of art of an architect of Haitian descent, Mr. Rodney Leon, entitled "The Ark of Return". It will be erected in remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. That work of art will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Slave Route Project, launched by UNESCO in Ouidah, Benin, in 1994.

Ms. Muna (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking President John Ashe, who, through the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, provides the international community with the opportunity to talk about the impact of that tragedy. I thank the President for this moment of sharing. I would also like to convey the gratitude of Cameroon and of its Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic, to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his admirable leadership.

This year, we have placed Haiti at the heart of our long-standing celebration of 25 March under the theme "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond". Once again, Cameroon is honoured to take part in this commemoration, and I would like to thank the great family of the United Nations for giving us the opportunity to take the floor on this occasion.

Like other countries of the Caribbean, Haiti illustrates the historic tragedy of the black people, as well as their tremendous resilience in the face of adversity. Torn from their continent, transported in inhuman conditions, subjugated for centuries, the sons and daughters of Africa who passed under the yoke of the transatlantic slave trade ultimately said no to servitude and to alienation. That is how, in time, the Haitian people assumed their historic and political destiny and faced up to nature's elements when parts of Kiskeya, the former name of Hispaniola, were struck by devastating catastrophes, such as the earthquake of 10 January 2010.

Once again, as it has throughout its history, Haiti showed remarkable determination and the resolute will to survive with heroic resilience. In the spirit of solidarity and humanitarian compassion, at the time Cameroon spontaneously and promptly provided significant financial support at the decision of the President of the Republic, Mr. Paul Biya. I would like to mention that Cameroon has for many years participated in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti in order to restore and build peace.

(*spoke in English*)

Cameroon has always contributed to the commemoration of the slave trade because our country

suffered greatly throughout that darkest chapter of our human history. On the occasion of this year's celebration, it is important to underline a historical element of the transatlantic slave trade that is not well known — the slave port of Bimbia, which is located 12 kilometres from the seaside town of Limbe in the south-west region of Cameroon. Earlier research on the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa focused more on El Mina, in Ghana, Gorée, in Senegal and Ouidah, in Benin.

As a matter of fact, Bimbia, on the Cameroon coast, played a major role in the history and industry of the transatlantic slave trade. Bimbia was known to Portuguese explorers as early as 1472. It became an important collecting point for slaves and other cargo during the second half of the eighteenth century. The first slave ship left Bimbia in 1777 for the island of Saint Vincent. For decades, thousands of enslaved men, women and children passed through Bimbia before being forced to turn their backs on the Bight of Biafra. Those who survived headed towards the Americas. Bimbia became so important in the Gulf of Guinea that its influence extended westward to and beyond Ambas Bay.

Today, Bimbia is classified as a national cultural site and has therefore become a very important site that benefits from our Government's full attention. As a consequence, our Government has embarked on gradually rehabilitating and restoring all its relics, while, at the same time, carrying out research in order to improve and add to the scientific and historical documentation on the Bimbia slave trade port.

Bearing all the above in mind, our country is ready to collaborate with the international community and any institution or well-wisher who would like to join or support us in the process of reconstituting our history and our collective memory. The intensification of specialized research on Bimbia is necessary and even indispensable to our country if we are to envisage inscription on the World Heritage List, according to UNESCO requirements.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm the resilience of the Haitian people in the face of adversity. Haiti's history reminds us of the need to respect human dignity. The international community must continue its fight and advocacy to renew and protect that dignity and thereby forever vanquish slavery in all its forms.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Seven years ago, the General Assembly designated 25 March 2007 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The international community thus chose to honour the memory of the millions of men, women and children who were torn from Africa's shores to be cast into the hell of the American colonies. It also sought to pay tribute to all those who, throughout history, opposed the slave trade and slavery — philosophers, scholars, writers, politicians, abolitionists, men of the cloth and individual citizens who denounced the ideology of terror and domination that arose from corrupt rhetorical arguments. They were fighters and martyrs who risked everything, including their lives, to denounce the enormous, dehumanizing enterprise that was the slave trade.

This year, the United Nations decided to closely associate the Republic of Haiti with this commemoration by choosing as its theme "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond". We are grateful for that honour. I would like, on behalf of the Government and people of Haiti, to convey my gratitude to the United Nations and the organizers of today's meeting for their distinguished esteem and recognition of a country whose proud achievements include having aimed the first mighty blow against slavery that would one day prove fatal to the enterprise. It took place in 1804 — 210 years ago today.

The tribute to Haiti is due first and foremost to the first resistance fighters, the freedom Maroons who have expressed their rejection of the slave system since the sixteenth century. It extends to those who picked up the torch in 1791; to the pioneer of independence, Toussaint Louverture; to the founding fathers of our country of Haiti, namely, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe and Alexandre Pétion; and the anonymous heroes of an epic war of liberation that, for the very first time in history, culminated in the triumph of a slave army of superb, bare-footed fighters from the ranks of the slave trade over their oppressors.

In the eyes of the Republic of Haiti, the United Nations tribute embodies an undeniably symbolic dimension. Indeed, Haiti's independence at the dawn of the nineteenth century represented a challenge aimed at the international order of the time, which was based on the slave trade and fed two types of slavery — economic and psychological — of the black man who was destined for forced labour, reduced to the rank of merchandise,

and subject to all forms of racial prejudice, disdain, indignity, injustice and oppression.

But Haiti was more than a mere challenge or anomaly in the eyes of the colonial Powers; it opened a deep breach in the system of dominant values of the time, condemning slavery and informing the world that the system based on slavery was null and void and no longer acceptable. Haiti's independence in 1804 therefore launched a powerful initial momentum. Among others, Great Britain and America abolished the transatlantic slave trade in 1807; France put an end to slavery in 1848, followed by the United States in 1865.

By questioning the very foundations of an international order that justified man's subjugation by man, based on the pigmentation and shade of his skin and turning into reality the principles of the first declaration of human and citizens rights in 1789, the Haitian revolution undeniably contributed to forging the universal concepts of humanity, according to the eloquent words of Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow.

In that light, the Haitian revolution of 1804, more humane and greater than that of 1776, according to Mr. Abel Nicolas Léger, was an important watershed in history. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it served as inspiration, point of reference and model to a great many national movements fighting for emancipation and independence in Latin America, the Caribbean and the African continent. It ultimately proved essential to the advent of a new moral order based on recognition of and respect for human dignity and the fundamental principles of the social contract — genuine freedom, equality and fraternity among men and women of all races without distinction.

Haiti's contribution to a universal concept of human rights is engraved in the tomes of history. Eminent historians do not hesitate to refer to the Haitian revolution as the third revolution, in line with the American revolution of 1776 and the French revolution of 1789 — the three major events of that bloody era that saw the old order toppled by an emerging new world. Indeed, Haiti's unique character deserves to be better known and recognized.

The United Nations has honoured Haiti on the occasion of the 210th anniversary of its independence, by this magnificent tribute, for which the people and Government of Haiti are especially grateful. The story of the end of the slave trade deserves to be told here at the United Nations, as so aptly recalled by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 1 March 2007.

I also pay tribute to the brotherly countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which have played an active and decisive role in the commemoration of this Day. Like Haiti, they have known the bonds of servitude and shared a fate that has made them more aware of and sensitive to every other struggle for rights, equity, justice and respect for the eminent dignity of human beings.

I express our appreciation for "The Ark of Return", the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery that will be erected to mark the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, as announced here at the United Nations on 23 September 2013. Thanks to the talented Rodney Leon, an architect of Haitian descent, this magnificent structure won an international contest in which 83 countries participated and 310 entries were considered. I thank UNESCO, the Department of Public Information, the CARICOM countries, the Chair of the Permanent Memorial Committee and the countries of the African Union, who directed, encouraged and supervised this project. Architect Rodney Leon deserves our warmest congratulations and our deep gratitude.

Much more than a simple exercise in remembrance, the International Day reminds us that the protection of human rights, which is at the very heart of the mission of the United Nations, is a continuously recurring, never-ending fight and that the struggle against slavery in its newer forms requires vigilant, sustained and determined work by the international community.

Many challenges still lie before us. Today, millions of people around the world are unfortunately still subjected to forced labour. Hundreds of thousands of others around the world are compelled to live in extreme poverty and vulnerability. The forced recruitment of child soldiers and human trafficking are just some of the forms of this ever-present abject exploitation, which is universally rejected by people of conscience. The consequences of slavery are at the core of glaring social and economic inequalities, intolerance and racism, which are sometimes institutional in nature and from which people or groups of people of African descent still suffer in various regions of the world.

This commemorative Day must therefore be one of joint reflection concerning the ground that has been covered since 1807, of awareness of the current

dangers posed by racism and of the need for enhanced cooperation by the international community to achieve a final victory over all the modern manifestations of servitude and man's exploitation of his fellow man.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain joins in the commemoration of this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Every 25 March, we come together here to recall one of the most dreadful and horrifying chapters in the history of humankind. I would say that it is also one of the most shameful chapters. The representative of Haiti stated with great feeling that this was a point in time when history became dehumanized. History lost its direction.

Many figures have been posited. One estimate is that between 14 and 15 million individuals lost their lives over the four centuries of slavery. We must therefore pay homage today to all those who perished in absolutely tragic and unjustifiable circumstances. It is also a moment when we must pay tribute to all those slaves and abolitionists who, thanks to their determination and courage, contributed to closing one of the most painful chapters in the history of humankind and were the veritable architects of the new American societies of which we are so proud.

Unfortunately, as many speakers have stated before me, slavery continues on in new, modern forms such as human trafficking and trafficking in children — forms that are just as cruel or even more cruel than the old ones. Spain has always been among those States that seek to combat slavery and all modern forms of slavery. I am therefore very proud to announce today an additional contribution of €30,000 Euros by Spain to the permanent memorial for the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, which was designed by the famous Haitian artist, Rodney Leon. That contribution will help ensure that we all remember, every day and forever, that those sad chapters in history must not be repeated in the future.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): It is my great honour to make a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan at today's meeting in commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Every year, 25 March provides us with an opportunity to remember the victims of slavery and remind ourselves that we must never forget the horrific history of that scourge. Since 2008, Japan has been one of the sponsors of the annual General Assembly resolution entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade". We appreciate the initiative taken by the States members of Caribbean Community and the African States to submit that important resolution.

In November 2013, Japan once again became a sponsor of that resolution. General Assembly resolution 68/7 endorses the initiative of Member States to erect a permanent memorial and requests the Secretary-General to organize a series of activities annually to commemorate the International Day.

The Universal Declaration of Human Right states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Japan will continue its efforts to end every form of slavery and to realize freedom and equality for all.

Mrs. Moreno Guerra (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on this important agenda item.

As Cubans, we are proud of our African roots. The identity of the Cuban nation developed through an cross-cultural process among various ethnic groups living in very difficult circumstances, first under colonialism and then neocolonialism. In 1959, we began a new stage of genuine integration that cherishes all components of the Cuban identity. We are a mixture of Spanish and African, for the most part, with contributions from Asia and indigenous peoples of the Americas. In Cuba as in other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, we see the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade. They arrived at the colonial plantations on the island as a result of that cruel trade of more than 1.3 million Africans. These men, women and children of Africa were forced from their villages and families and sold as slave labourers on the other side of the Atlantic.

Over the centuries, the Cuban culture and national character also emerged from African crucible. Cubans are grateful to our African ancestors for their wisdom, their creativity, their adaptability to adverse circumstances, the richness of their histories and religious beliefs, the rhythms of their music, their energy and temperament and, more basically, their spirit of rebellion against injustice and their undaunted courage in the fight for independence and liberty. The freed slaves and their descendants were principal

players in the various stages of the war that allowed the Cuban people to exercise their self-determination.

As was expressed by the Commander in Chief of the Cuban revolution, Mr. Fidel Castro, at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001, the inhumane exploitation of humankind and peoples from three continents, including Asia, affected the destiny and current life of more than 450 million people in the developing world. The poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, child mortality and short life expectancy they suffer, and other calamities impossible to enumerate here, amaze and horrify us. They are the contemporary victims of a barbarity that has endured centuries and are owed reparations for the horrendous crimes committed against against their ancestor and peoples.

The developed world is responsible for the accelerated and almost unstoppable destruction of the environment. It has reaped the greatest benefits of conquest and colonialism, slavery and the transatlantic trade, and rapacious exploitation of hundreds of millions of children in the nations of the South. Cuba firmly supports the just request of a sincere apology and compensation demanded by the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as reparations for the genocide of indigenous peoples and the slavery of Africans. Cuba also endorses the special and differentiated treatment called for by developing countries, particularly in Africa, in their economic international relations.

Cuba supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution introduced every year on this agenda item by the CARICOM countries and the African Group. We recognize the importance of strengthening United Nations activities and other international organizations, such as UNESCO, on this issue. The minimum that the international community can do is to make reparations for the genocide of indigenous populations and the crimes against humanity committed through the transatlantic slave trade of Africans. Cuba rejects the egoism of wealth and the impunity enjoyed by those who committed the crimes against humanity associated with the historic development of capitalism. They are the same people who today represent the main beneficiaries of globalization founded on the neoliberal model of plunder, the lethal arms of neocolonialist financing, and new threats and the use of force against peoples' free exercise of self-determination.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 120?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.